

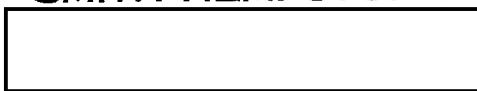
"Our Times"

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HEMPSTONE

SMITH HEMPSTONE

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January 2, 1976

Dear General Walters:

Since my column no longer appears in Washington, I thought the attached (a) might escape your all-seeing eye and (b) be of some interest to you.

Best wishes for the New Year.

Cordially,

Smith Hempstone

Note of thanks

MORI/CDF

SMITH HEMPSTONE**"Our Times"***column of commentary*

In From the Cold

By SMITH HEMPSTONE

ARLINGTON, VA. -- On the orders of the President, they buried him among heroes. And it was meet and right so to do.

For although Richard Skeffington Welch never wore a uniform, the CIA's station chief in Athens -- gunned down Dec. 23 outside his home by three unidentified assassins and buried yesterday (Tues., Jan. 6) in Arlington National Cemetery -- was killed in action after nearly a quarter of a century in the service of his country.

Who killed 46-year-old Dick Welch? Take your pick:

- The KGB, which in 1968 published his name in the East German book entitled Who's Who in CIA.

- The editors of the Washington quarterly, Counter-Spy, which last year published the names of 150 CIA station chiefs, including Welch.

- Norman Mailer and his radical chic friends, who provided the initial funding for Counter-Spy.

- Author Philip Agee, a former CIA agent (and member of Counter-Spy's advisory board), who has published the names of scores of his former colleagues and called for their "neutralization."

- The editors of the Athens News, an English language paper which in November published Welch's name and address and those of other CIA agents in Athens -- but declined to publish the names of 10 Russian KGB agents serving in Greece.

- The members of the congressional committees that for nearly a year have been holding the CIA up to ridicule and verbal abuse.

All of these, it could be said, had an indirect hand in Welch's murder, and it seems to me the time has come to put a stop to this sort of thing. Sure, the CIA has been guilty of errors of judgment, and at times has seriously violated its mandate. But these failings have been admitted and corrected. What the Agees and their ilk have to ask themselves is this:

Which side am I on? To which country do I owe allegiance? Do I want to be an accessory to the murder of one of my countrymen?

The identity of the masked men who pulled the trigger does not much matter. In all probability, Welch's murder was not a KGB assassination. There is an unwritten understanding between the two intelligence organizations that they do not target each other's senior officers (Welch is the first CIA station chief

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murdered since the agency was formed in 1947).

The CIA's operation in Greece is a large one. The country has land frontiers with three Communist nations -- Albania, Yugoslavia and Bulgaria -- and its islands stud the Soviet Union's sea lanes into the Mediterranean.

The fledgling agency's first group of officers, many of them graduates of the wartime OSS, played a key role in defeating the Communists in the Greek civil war of 1944-49. The Greek intelligence agency, the KYP, was set up with CIA help.

Because several members of the military junta that ruled Greece from 1967 to 1974 were KYP graduates, the CIA has been accused of masterminding the coup that brought the colonels to power. The CIA has also been accused, again without proof, of having engineered the temporary disposition of the Cypriot president, Archbishop Makarios, in 1974.

Welch served in Cyprus in the early 1960s, and it is possible that he was killed to settle an old score. But it is a better guess that he was murdered by members of some far-left Greek group not subject to Communist discipline.

As station chief, he was the biggest fish in the Athens pool. And that made him a natural target.

But Welch was more than a "fish" or a "target." He was a husband and the father of three children. He was a man who enjoyed music, a classics scholar, a chess buff and, despite being blind in one eye (a childhood accident that kept him out of the military after his graduation from Harvard in 1951), an ardent tennis player.

And remembering all this, it might have been nice if Sen. Frank Church and Rep. Otis Pike had managed to be on hand when Welch's 23-year-old son, a Marine lieutenant, brought his father's flag-draped coffin home to Washington's Andrews Air Force Base last week. But then their committees are charged with investigating the CIA, not honoring its dead.

So now a 32nd star will go up on the marbled wall of the entrance hall of CIA headquarters in Langley, Va. Those stars represent the intelligence officers who have lost their lives in 30 years of not-so-cold war.

And a few weeks from now, Counter-Spy will be coming out with an edition giving the names of CIA agents serving in Angola, Paria and Stockholm. It makes you sick.

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